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THE
CLAIMS OF THE PUBLIC

ON THE

MINISTER,

AND THE

SERVANTS OF THE PUBLIC,

STATED.

BY JOHN EARL OF STAIR.

MAGNA PETIS, PHAETON! ET QUÆ NEC VIRIBUS ISTIS
MUNERA CONVENIANT, NEC TAM PUERILIBUS ANNIS.

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CLAIMS OF THE PUBLIC, &c.

ONE Session of Parliament has passed away; another is now in the wane, since the auspicious change that was to have given a prosperous stability to this country, took place; yet the great months have not begun to run; the precious hours of peace are still lost in idle declamations and useless altercations; alike trifling as violent, alike degrading to the parties concerned, as unprofitable to the Public.

In any thing that has as yet been offered to the public view by the present Administration, the hand of the great master does not appear; the de-

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sign is hackneyed and vulgar, and the execution harsh and unpleasing. So far from shewing a firmness of mind, and a fertility of resource equal to every difficulty, they have not hitherto had even the courage to lay before the Public a fair state of their real situation. To hold power and official pre-eminence, without being able to make the due returns of duty and service to the Public, are terms mean and ignoble; principles to which no better objects may be assigned, than the self-interested gratifications that flow from the emoluments of place, and its wretched constant appendages, the official undistinguishing flatteries of the subalterns of place and power, and the unblushing adulations of hungry expectants. The great marked feature in the late change, the substitution of Peerage for Place and Pension, has been far from advantageous,

either

either to the Crown or People. By forcing the Crown to use too prodigally its brightest prerogative, that of creating Peers, the just and noble ambition of deserving hereditary honours, by great services and sacrifices to the State, has been weakened. Distinctions that every wise government should make only open and attainable by merit and virtue, have been, if not prostituted, at least used to promote, strengthen, and retain private, partial, and factious interests and influences. Place and Pension pass away; but here hereditary duns, hereditary claimants on the Royal Munificence, which must be satisfied, have been established and substituted; for in the fluctuating variations of sublunary matters, present prosperity is little to be relied on; and those who do not want for themselves, have ever needy friends and
 rela-

relations to provide for, all which must ultimately come out of, and drain the public purse, whilst the Crown purchases a short interval of precarious tranquillity, at probably the expence of a long and bitter repentance. Favours that cannot be resumed are soon forgotten, and too often, in the restless, unprincipled fluctuation of parties in this country, are even turned against the beneficent hand that conferred them:

THOUGH I could have wished, and indeed still wish and expect, that our young Minister has not embarked on the tempestuous sea of his public administration, without some plan and chart of his own to guide his course by; but should the youthful ardour to possess, have thrown into oblivion the means of holding power, with credit to himself, and advantage

age to the Public, I think (though somewhat stale and out of date) his claims of assistance from the great bodies, who by their Addresses, and proffered lives and fortunes, so loudly called him forth, are still in force ; yet if not prescribed, they grow less strong, by every hour of timid procrastination. Let him then boldly demand from the Addressers, the necessary pledged and promised aids his country wants : If their general voice is cold, the infamy is theirs, not his ; he may then quit with dignity a station, the false unsubstantial professions of his friends prevent him from holding with honour :

Quem si non tenuit, magnis tamen excidit ausis.

Which is the best excuse for every kind of temerity ; and should he chuse to continue in place, he will at least have given some manifestation and proof to the
Public,

Public, of his sensibility to what he owes to his country and situation. I am not his enemy. On the contrary, I am his friend, the friend to his fair fame, and wish to mark out to him the narrow path, the up-hill, self-denying track, that leads to glory. What I write are the pure dictates of impartial reason and truth; at least they appear so to me. I do not wish for any new changes; I do not like changes in Administration; they have generally been for the worse, and always at the expence of the purse of the People, or at that of the Constitution, one or both. I must indeed except the one that brought the late Earl of Chatham into power; but even there, there arises a certain bitterness, which makes harsh the sweets of glory and success. Our triumphs were bought at the price of a necessary perpetual future adherence

herence to peace. A lesson of eternal moderation was left us by our great Minister, but, alas ! ill observed by his successors, though the necessity was obvious and conclusive ; for the Excess of the real permanent Incomes of this Country, during eleven years of peace and prosperity, that followed the conclusion of a glorious and successful War, did not amount, all fairly balanced and stated, to quite Four Millions ; of which above One Million arose from a most pernicious source, continued Annual Lotteries ; and this under the conduct of a variety of Administrations, all striving to recommend themselves to the Public by Economy. And though the Administrations of the different Parties were not of the very first energy, yet the attention was uninterrupted, and perhaps the efforts were as great as the

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temper

temper of the times would admit of. I do not even except the Administration of the Noble Lord in the Blue Ribbon ; whom, because he has nothing now to give, it is the fashion to charge with every miscarriage, and, above all, with the American War, as if he had carried it on singly and alone. Yet it is well known, that, till the misfortunes of General Burgoyne, unhappily, the almost universal voice was for that War ; nor do I believe a Majority of the Nation were against it, till, by the capture of Lord Cornwallis and his Army, the farther prosecution of it became impossible. To my knowledge, his Lordship's system and opinions in American matters were much more liberal, and infinitely less sanguinary, than those of almost any of his Coadjutors ; though many of the last are now in high offices, if not with the
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approbation, at least with the acquiescence, of the Public. Impartiality alone dictates what I write. I owe the Noble Lord no obligations: on the contrary, in the only transaction I ever had with him, not for myself, but for a very near and dear connection, I thought him, though perhaps strictly just, yet not generous, not feeling; qualities which have generally been met with in, and give lustre to, his private character, and from the merit of which the Noble Lord (I think) had reason to expect, that the tear of pity shed o'er the virtues of the Man, should have dimmed the keen malignant eye of Censure to the failings of the Minister.

I now proceed to make good, from Facts; my allegations relative to the still

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declining state of our National Finances, which, if not soon and effectually remedied, must make every other care superfluous and unavailing about public matters ; for without a Revenue adequate in some degree to our Expences, we are nothing, and all our boasted privileges, constitution, and pre-eminences, are words without a meaning. In the threshold of this business, I must deprecate and protest against the injustice of any odium being thrown on me, as the revealer of my Country's nakedness. I am innocent ; it has been the fashion of the times, by every means, both by single and separate statements, and by commissions of every kind and denomination, to make the horrors of our situation plain and obvious even to the meanest capacity. But there we stop short ; and

no steps, in any degree adequate; so far as I know, have been taken to remedy an evil so pressing and so fatal.

MUCH indeed has been said, and written, about the proper employment of the Balance by which our Incomes were to exceed our Expences; but no method has been mentioned (at least, I have not heard of any that appears to me likely) to make this desirable event certain, or even probable.—After stating every thing that can and ought to make us absolutely despair, by what strange inconsistency, if we give credit to, and reason from, the Facts you lay before us, do you call us gloomy Politicians? And how can you expect that, in opposition to evidence the most conclusive to the contrary, we should believe any man's naked, unvouched
 asser-

assertion, that this Country is fully equal to every burthen and incumbrance laid upon it? Yet unsupported assertion is all that is offered. Prove it, by providing an effective Income equal to our Expenditure, and you make a Nation happy. But to proceed :

IN the year 1784, now ended, the demands on the Public were : Navy—Three Millions One Hundred and Fifty-three Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-nine Pounds : Increase of Navy Debt during that year, Twelve Hundred and Twenty-seven Thousand Nine Hundred and Nineteen Pounds : Ordnance—Six Hundred and Ten Thousand One Hundred and Forty-nine Pounds : Army—Three Millions Nine Hundred and Two Thousand Two Hundred and Sixty-eight Pounds : Miscellaneous — Two Hundred and
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and Thirty-one Thousand and Ninety-four Pounds : To the Public Creditors, whose Debts are funded, the whole expence of Management included—nearly Eight Millions Eight Hundred Thousand Pounds. The Interest of the unfunded Debts, carrying Interest, amounted to nearly Six Hundred Thousand Pounds. The Civil List (Prince of Wales included) is estimated to amount to a Million. The total Demand, therefore, on the Public, for 1784, amounts to Nineteen Millions Five Hundred and Twenty-five Thousand Two Hundred and Ninety-nine Pounds. To answer which, in a recent Publication (entitled, “ Comparative State of the Public Revenues, for the Year ended 10th October 1783, and for the Year ended 10th October 1784”), from authentic documents, I have shewn, that the Public

Revenue

Revenue amounted, for the year ended the 10th of October 1784, to no more than Twelve Millions Six Hundred and Forty-five Thousand Five Hundred and Nineteen Pounds. The Balance, therefore, by which the Public Revenues for the above year fall short of the Public Expences, amounts to Six Millions Eight Hundred and Seventy-nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty Pounds; out of which allowing (though I cannot discover quite so much) Three Millions Two Hundred Thousand Pounds, as arising out of the Arrears of the War, the permanent amount of the Excess of the Public Peace Expences, over the produce of the Public Incomes, will be Three Millions Six Hundred and Seventy-nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty Pounds.

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RECAPITULATION for 1784.

			£.
Navy,	—	—	3,153,869
Increase of Navy Debts during that Year,			1,227,919
Ordnance,	—	—	610,149
Army,	—	—	3,902,268
Miscellaneous,	—	—	231,094
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Navy, Army, Ordnance, and Miscella- neous	—	—	9,125,299
Civil List,	—	—	1,000,000
Funded Creditors of the Public,	—		8,800,000
Unfunded Debt carrying Interest,	—		600,000
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Total Demand,	—	—	19,525,299
From which deduct the Produce of the Revenues for the Year, ended 10th of October, 1784,		—	12,645,519
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Gross Balance against the Public,			6,879,878
Deduct (supposed to rise out of the War)			3,200,000
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Nett permanent Balance by which the Public Peace Expenditure exceeds the Public Income,		—	3,679,780
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A GENERAL opinion and belief having gone forth, that few or no further burthens, in addition to the present, were to be laid, or necessary to be laid, on the Subject, assertions so ill-founded and erroneous, for the benefit of the People and the Government, cannot be too soon contradicted. This engages me, contrary to what I wish, and originally intended, to enter into a discussion of the probable amount of the Income and Expenditure of the year 1785. In this, supported by what is already voted for the service of that year, and by so recent a precedent as 1784, I certainly cannot greatly err; and as I mean to incline the balance, in every thing that is doubtful, in favour of the Public, my errors cannot excite any ill-founded alarm beyond the Truth, which (God knows) is alarming enough.

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THE Militia, which was not called out in 1784, being, I understand, to be called out in 1785, and little, if any thing, of the expence the Public have been at in the new Settlements forming in Nova Scotia and elsewhere by the American Refugees and others, being stated in the Accounts for 1784; no compensation for the Loyalists being adjusted; and the Half-pay of the Army not being complete; and some Arrear of the War being to be expected in the year 1785, and for some years to come; I think I might be warranted in stating the Expences of the Navy, Increase of Navy Debt, Ordnance, Army, and the Miscellaneous Expences, taken jointly, at Six Millions Five Hundred Thousand Pounds; but, on the principle laid down, of favour to the Public, I shall only state Six Millions. The Funded Creditors of the Public, the

same as in 1784, Eight Millions Eight Hundred Thousand Pounds. The Interest of the Unfunded Debt will be something more than in 1784, by more of the Navy Debt then bearing Interest, and may amount to Seven Hundred Thousand Pounds. Civil List, as before, One Million. The total Demand on the Public for 1785 will, therefore, be Sixteen Millions Five Hundred Thousand Pounds.

To answer this, I shall suppose the Public Revenues to produce (undiminished by the heavy new Taxes laid on in 1784) as much as they did in the year ended the 10th of October 1784, which was a very plentiful and prosperous year. The Produce was in that year Twelve Millions Six Hundred and Forty-five Thousand Five Hundred and Nineteen

teen Pounds. To this I have to add the Produce of the Taxes laid on in 1784: I acknowledge I am under some difficulty to know what to state the Amount of them at, many of them being generally obnoxious: Particularly that on Cotton Goods must, I imagine, be repealed, or greatly diminished. I have likewise great doubts of the Efficiency of what is called the Commutation Tax. I think the burthens on Houses (a precarious unproductive Property, in proportion to the Capital sunk in the Erection, and expences of Reparations) are by this addition made too heavy, and quite (as I apprehend) intolerable. I shall state the burthens that affect them :

Duties on Houses and Windows laid on in 1766, Annual Average Amount,	£.	454,960
Houses 1778, Annual Average Amount,		108,728
Commutation Tax,	—	600,000
By the Annual Land-Tax raised yearly on Houses, at least	—	300,000
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Nett Annual Charge on Houses,		1,463,688
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Which I believe will be nearly as much. The above 300,000l. deducted as the remaining Nett Produce of the Land Tax at 4s. will amount to; making the Tax on Houses almost equal to that on Land; which is certainly quite absurd and inconsistent. The one must be too much, or the other too little; both of which, I believe, are true.

I NEVER approved of giving up so considerable a part of our Revenue as the Tea Duties, on so rash a Substitution; which, if persisted in, will, I doubt,
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first deform, and then depopulate. I shall, however, on the principle of favour to the Public, state the Amount of the Taxes of 1784 to reach, in 1785, Six Hundred Thousand Pounds, in place of the Nine Hundred and Eighty Thousand Pounds they are given for; the general Average of the Taxes granted since the War, having fallen short in nearly a Fourth from what they were given for. I have made the Deficiency of those of 1784 considerably larger, on account of their being more exceptionable, generally, than any laid on previous to that period. This will make the Revenue of the Public to amount, in 1785, to Thirteen Millions Two Hundred and Forty-five Thousand Five Hundred and Nineteen Pounds, and will leave a Balance against the Public (by which the Peace Expenditure will exceed the Income) of Three Millions Two Hundred

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dred and Fifty-four Thousand Four Hundred and Eighty-one Pounds; and this, as appears to me, will be nearly the state of the Public Account, not only for 1785, but for succeeding years of peace, till some farther aids are brought to increase the Revenue, provided the Expence incurred is fairly brought forward.

RECAPITULATION for 1785.

Navy, Ordnance, Army, and Miscellane- ous,	—	—	£.	6,000,000
Civil List,	—	—		1,000,000
Funded Creditors,	—			8,800,000
Unfunded Debt bearing Interest,	—			700,000
				<hr/> 16,500,000
Deduct Annual Income,	—			<hr/> 13,245,519
Annual Balance by which the Expence of the Public exceeds its Incomes,				<hr/> 3,254,481

IN these Statements it is understood, that the East-India Company is equal to
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the payment of their Duties to Government, as they fall due. Though credited in the Account of the Amount of the Taxes presented to the House of Commons on the 2d of February, I cannot learn for certain that they are paid; though some part of them, perhaps, may.

MINISTERS may deceive themselves, but they cannot much longer deceive the Public. Something must be done. The magic incantation of Lord North and the Coalition, the hitherto efficient and sufficient cause of every evil in these kingdoms; physical and moral, past, present, and to come, begins to lose its force. Internal Reform and Regulation, the next delusion the Public is to be amused with, cannot hold long. Alas!

what resource of Finance can arise from

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internal Regulation and Reform? Every thing that can admit of Reform, is either held by the mortmain gripe of Patent, or by what is an equally tenacious tenure, Parliamentary Interest. Ministers themselves hold some of the Grants the most obnoxious to Reform. Will they set the good example? I fear not. Through every department almost of the State, those who do the business scarce have bread to eat. Acting on salaries established long ago, when the necessaries of life were infinitely cheaper than they are at present, they are in general the oppressed, not the oppressing; and upon a fair enquiry and average, I am firmly of opinion, it would rather turn out a matter of compassion, and augmentation of salaries, than of diminution to the Public.

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So help me God, as I am no enemy to the present Men in Power. I mean to animate, not to depress. I appear for the Public; and in their right I must and will urge a claim of Service and Duty in return for Place and Power. So far from Faction, I do not deviate even into Speculation, nor meddle with the other Distractions of the State. Figures are of no Sect or Party. The Plan I ask, the Condition I demand, viz. an Income equal to a Peace Expenditure, is the *sine qua non* of our Political Existence: without it they are not Ministers—we are not a People.

THOUGH we have already more than enough on our hands, yet, alas! new cares, new sollicitudes, must soon claim our attention. The rising troubles on the Continent are, or may be, matters of great consequence

to this Country. We are ever in extremes ; there is a middle way betwixt involving ourselves in every paltry foreign squabble, and a total neglect of all influence and consequence with Foreign Powers. It is difficult to make a Neutrality that is not armed, nor supported by Alliances, respected. Our Sovereign, for his German Dominions, must take a part one way or other. Was it possible to find money, an Army of Observation, composed of the troops of Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and Brunswick, would be a desirable measure: This would give weight to our King, protection to his Foreign Dominions, to the Liberties and Constitution of the Empire, to the Protestant Cause, to the general Freedom of Mankind, and might, perhaps, prevent a War.

IN what relates to Foreign Affairs, I must applaud the conduct of one of the Leaders of the Coalition (I am not afraid of names). When in power, he endeavoured to re-gain some influence, friendship and alliance for this country abroad. The great science in Politics is to prevent war. A few months of war, or even preparation for war, costs more than the subsidies of many years. I am sorry I ever (I have seldom done it) mentioned private characters; they ought to be held sacred. The defects in private life are not absolute disqualifications from public confidence. Many, very many of the ablest and most successful Ministers and Generals, have been far, very far from correct in their private life and manners; yet certainly a private character, of moral fitness and rectitude, is the best pledge that

that can be given for public integrity; and of all the defects in private life, the addition to gaming is the most disqualifying, either for private friendship or public trust. Nevertheless, Exclusion is akin to Persecution, and scarce ever should be adopted by the Crown or the People.

AND NOW I am upon the subject of apology and recollection, with all my enthusiasm for the East-India Company's great Minister, with all my approbation of the conduct of the war in the East, which I still retain, and hold Mr. Hastings a firm unequalled Pilot in a dangerous sea, yet I must not be understood to pronounce any opinion about the Company's commercial concerns. I am no competent judge whether they are retrievable or not; nor do I pledge myself for any part of their System
of

of Finance, whether acting as Merchants or Sovereigns.

As I mean to die in peace and charity with all mankind, if any thing has fallen from my pen to give offence to a very respectable body of men united to understand and to defend our Laws, Liberties, and Constitution, I am heartily sorry for it. I never meant to give them offence. Possibly I might think it was something out of time, to be disputing about the rights of the Manor when the Mortgage was foreclosing. Let them assist me in redeeming the Country, and then I pledge myself to assist them in reforming the Constitution of it. But till these matters are more in a train of being brought about, let us in the mean time smoke the Calumet, the Pipe of Peace, together.

ALL

ALL I ask of the Public in return for many laborious, well-meant, unavailing endeavours to serve them, is, that they would speak of me as I am—

Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice:

Then they must speak of one, the votary and the victim too of Truth; of one that loved his Country not wisely, but too well.

Dover-Street,
March 23, 1785.

F I N I S.







